



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Oregon man charged with human trafficking

Victim was allegedly kidnapped from Mexico and forced to work for marijuana growers

PORTLAND, Oregon -- A 39-year-old Mexican national who allegedly kidnapped a woman from Mexico and forced her to work against her will at his marijuana growing operation made his initial appearance in federal court today to face human trafficking charges.

Ramon Lopez-Montanez was arrested at his Salem residence yesterday by agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).



The indictment describes how Lopez-Montanez beat, stabbed, sexually assaulted, and threatened his victim and her relatives. According to the indictment, the victim was also forced to witness acts of violence committed on other women and children. The victim told investigators she was under the constant watch of armed guards while she was held.

Lopez-Montanez is charged with forced labor, marijuana manufacturing, and using a false government document. According to the indictment, he grew marijuana in Salem and Otis, Oregon, and used a false Oregon driver's license in the name of another individual to open a bank account in Lincoln City. The Multnomah County Sheriff's Human Trafficking Task Force, the Salem Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Lincoln County Interagency Narcotics Team (LINT), and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office assisted in the investigation.

"Human trafficking is a serious and harmful crime," said Leigh Winchell, special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigations in Seattle. "Those who are victims of this criminal activity deserve our full and immediate attention, and ICE is committed to pursuing those who engage in this egregious form of personal exploitation."

"The U.S. Attorney's Office will work closely with our law enforcement partners to investigate and prosecute what amounts to modern day slavery," said U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut. "We will not tolerate the exploitation and abuse of men, women and children who are the victims of human trafficking."

"Human trafficking is oftentimes a silent crime that targets the most vulnerable of victims," said Daniel R. Nielsen, the acting special agent in charge of the FBI's Portland Division. "We are working very closely with our local, state and federal partners to attack this problem. We encourage

those in the community who may have knowledge about such activities to contact us as soon as possible.”

Federal authorities are releasing a photograph of Lopez-Montanez’s in hopes obtaining more information related to the crime. Specifically, investigators are hoping to identify other victims and other homes or buildings that were used for growing marijuana. Anyone with information should call the FBI at (503) 224-4181.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.